

**NORTHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL
ANNUAL ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING
REPORT 2001-2002**



CARING FOR NORTHLAND AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

OVERVIEW

The **Annual Environmental Monitoring Report 2001-2002** is the third Annual Environmental Monitoring Report produced by the Northland Regional Council (NRC).

The Annual Environmental Monitoring Report is a summary of the environmental monitoring activities undertaken by the NRC. The report covers the period from July 1 2001 to June 30 2002 and relates specifically to the objectives and performance targets set out in the 2001-2002 Annual Plan.

The Council released its first comprehensive **State of the Environment** (SOE) report in May 2002. The SOE report aimed to inform both the Regional Council and public on the State of Northland's environment, the human pressures acting on it, and the Council's responses to environmental issues. The first SOE report provided a benchmark for which to measure future changes against.

The purpose of the Annual Environmental Monitoring Report is to review the Council's environmental information, and to update the comprehensive State of the Environment report on a regular basis.

As in previous reports, the following resources are reported on:

- Air
- Surface Water
- Groundwater
- Coast
- Land

In addition, the Annual Environmental Monitoring Report includes information on:

- Farm Dairy Effluent (FDE) monitoring
- Environmental Incidents received during the year
- Ngawha Geothermal Monitoring
- Joint Iwi Monitoring Programmes
- Hazardous Substances and Contaminated Sites

Each chapter begins with the relevant Performance Targets from the **Annual Plan 2001/02**. The Annual Plan sets out the work programmes for the Council for the year (and their costs). It is in effect an agreement between the Council and the residents and ratepayers of the region. The Annual Plan contains performance targets, which are reported against here.

This report does not include the findings of specific individual resource consent monitoring.

Why Monitor and Report on the State of the Environment?

The Resource Management Act 1991 requires the Northland Regional Council to monitor and report on the state of the environment. The first Annual Environmental Monitoring Report was published in 1998-99, and the first comprehensive State of the Environment Report was published in early 2002.

State of the Environment reporting provides important information to help with environmental decision making. This includes information to:

- Assess the current state of natural and physical resources and determine whether they are getting better or worst over time.
- Determine the key pressures on resources and how these change over time.
- Measure whether policies and plans are being effective and achieving their anticipated outcomes.

This Annual Environmental Monitoring Report provides information on the specific state of the regions resources and the results of the past years environmental monitoring programmes. More comprehensive

analysis of trends in the environment and progress in achieving anticipated environmental outcomes in policies will be covered in future reports.

Environmental Monitoring Information

Environmental monitoring carried out by NRC can be separated into two major categories:

- State of the Environment monitoring.
- Compliance monitoring.

State of the Environment monitoring provides information about the 'state' of a particular resource or environmental system. Information is gathered by the measurement of selected 'indicators', examples might be the dissolved oxygen concentration of a river or the number of air quality incidents reported to the Environmental-Hotline¹. State of the Environment information can be used to assess background environmental quality and to monitor trends or changes over time. Improved identification of significant environmental issues and informed decision making result from State of the Environment monitoring.

Compliance monitoring deals with the monitoring and enforcement of resource consents, regional plans and statutory environmental standards. Monitoring is targeted at the specific environmental effects of activities to ensure that all resource consent conditions and related standards are being adhered to. Compliance monitoring is carried out in an attempt to minimise the adverse effects of people's use of the environment.

Environmental Indicators

Northland Regional Council cannot monitor and report on every environmental issue in Northland. It is not practical or cost-effective to do so. Environmental indicators have been developed as measures to show trends or changes in the environment, and have been used throughout this report where possible. However, they don't necessarily explain the causes for environmental change.

In New Zealand, we are only now beginning to develop sound environmental indicators to measure the health of our environment. The Ministry for the Environment has taken the lead in developing indicators through their Environmental Reporting Programme. As these indicators are developed they will be adopted and used to monitor trends in the important environmental issues within the Northland region, and to ensure consistency for national reporting.

More information on the Environmental Reporting Programme can be found at www.environment.govt.nz

Northland Regional Monitoring Strategy

The Northland Regional Council is about to start a review of its State of the Environment monitoring strategy. The purpose of the monitoring strategy is to better identify and prioritise state of the environment monitoring programmes. This is achieved by identifying information needs recognised by the Regional Policy Statement Implementation process and a by looking at gaps in our current programmes. The Regional Monitoring Strategy will build on the findings of both the comprehensive State of the Environment Report and the Annual Environmental Monitoring Report.

¹ Environmental hotline is a toll-free number for the reporting of environmental incidents in Northland